The science behind Reason to Rise

The process of researching the science of depression recovery revealed an amazing compatibility between Christian beliefs and the science of improving human well-being. The Reason to Rise program illustrates this compatibility by systematically introducing information to participants from both the biblical as well as psychological perspective. By clearly demonstrating this compatibility, participants are not only encouraged in their faith but also more likely to act on the recommendations.

The Christian Perspective

The value of a Christian program focused on depression recovery is strongly supported by a significant body of research that demonstrates how people of faith rely on their spirituality as an important coping resource while suffering from depression (Cooper, Brown, Thi Vu, Ford, & Powe, 2001; Desrosiers & Miller, 2007; Larsen, Vickers, Sampson, Netzel, & Hayes, 2006; Mela et al., 2008; Sorajjakool, et al., 2008; Wiggins, Uphold, Shehan, & Reid, 2008; Wittink, Jin Hui, Lewis, & Barg, 2009; Yi et al., 2006; S. J. Young, Cashwell, & Shcherbakova, 2000).

Further to identifying spirituality as an effective coping resource, existential or spiritual well-being has also been found to have an inverse relationship with symptoms of depression (McClain, Rosenfeld, & Breitbart, 2003; Mela, et al., 2008; Phillips, Paukert, Stanley, & Kunik, 2009; Wink, Larsen, & Dillon, 2005). It is therefore not enough to assume any type of faith will be of value, but important to address the issue of Spiritual Health and Spiritual Depression as part of this program.

The Psychological Perspective

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)'s latest guidelines (Pilling, et al., 2009) on the management of depression in adults outline step based approach working from low-intensity through to high-intensity psychological interventions for the management of depression. The Reason to Rise program incorporates many of the low-intensity psychological interventions while providing individuals with detailed information that will facilitate their decision making around the use of the high-intensity interventions.

Although Reason to Rise program is based on the principles of guided self-help, which has been proven to facilitate depression recovery for those with sub-threshold symptoms of depression, moderate and mild depression, the Reason to Rise program is also different to those programs included in the research evidence outlined in this guideline in a number of ways:

- Each Reason to Rise session includes a detailed presentation of the materials rather than relying solely on participant’s reading motivation and ability.
- During each session group participants get the opportunity to explore the implications of the particular topic for themselves, while also benefitting from hearing other’s experiences.
• Participants have 2.5 hours of contact time per session for 12 weeks compared to the maximum of 50 minutes for 10 sessions reviewed in the NICE guidelines.

• Reason to Rise is a group program that provides individuals with the added benefit of social interaction and support. The sample of group programs evaluated in the NICE guidelines is so small that evidence on their effectiveness is not conclusive.

Features of the Reason to Rise program that is strongly supported by the NICE guidelines are:

1. Providing comprehensive information on the nature, possible causes and possible treatments for symptoms of depression, thus enabling participants to take care of themselves and seek the most appropriate treatment based on their type of depression and circumstances

2. Providing information about the risk and treatment of suicide

3. Inviting families and close friends to a multiple family group psycho-education session (McFarlane & Cunningham, 1996). Not only does this session provide family and close friends with the information and support they need to take care of themselves, this intervention also strengthens the level of social support for participants

4. Emphasising the importance of sleep hygiene

5. Providing guided self-help based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy

6. Encouraging physical activity

7. Providing psycho-education on the use of anti-depressants and St John’s Wort

8. Encouraging behavioural activation

The Reason to Rise program includes additional areas of potential intervention to address issues that have also been shown to be associated with the onset, recovery and ongoing prevention of depression. These are:

1. Information about the role of stress in the aetiology of depression (Caspi, et al., 2003; Hobson et al., 1998; Schneiderman, et al., 2005) and a variety of physical and psychological strategies to reduce and / or manage stress, such as abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, increasing activity levels, development of interpersonal communication strategies (based on personality differences), assertive communication skills and encouraging self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994)

2. Dietary guidelines based on available research (Brees, 2008; Hume, 2000) that will facilitate optimal psychological well-being

3. Information about the role that strong emotions such as grief and anger can play in depression and strategies (Meier, et al., 1999; Powell, 2009; Rando, 1993) to manage these emotions in a useful way

4. Information about how depression impacts relationships, the inherent values and benefits of relationships (Berry, 2005) and strategies to improve personal relationships

5. Information about the value of a support group and the best way to develop and utilise a support group (Meier, et al., 1999)
6. Information about how work and recreational activities can contribute to mental well-being (Carr, 1997; Jenkins, 1997; Kahn & Cuthbertson, 1998; Meier, et al., 1999; Murray et al., 2010; The report of the APA Presidential Initiative on Work and Families: Aligning public policies, schools, and communities with the realities of contemporary families and the workplace, 2004) and a guided approach that includes time management and activity scheduling to incorporate an appropriate balance of these activities into the lives of participants.

7. Identification of physical and psychological strategies to maintain general well-being long term and manage potential long-term risks for those who have suffered from depression.

8. Participants attend a follow-up session after three months to review recovery strategies and progress.

9. The completion of the DASS during the first, last and follow-up sessions provide an ongoing review of participant well-being (Depression, Anxiety and Stress).

10. The completion of the Outcome Rating Scale and Session Rating Scale at the beginning and end of each session provides a time and cost efficient review of treatment outcomes (Campbell & Hemsley, 2009).

In summary, Reason to Rise is a depression recovery program that incorporates initiatives that will not only contribute to the recovery of depression symptoms through including all recommended evidence based practices, but also contribute to the ongoing management and prevention of future depressive episodes through a focus on stress management and incorporation of other well-being practices and faith enhancing activities.

References


Berry, M (2005) Contentment & the Four Pillars, [www.4pillars.info](http://www.4pillars.info)


Crowe, V. L. H. (2009). *From unknown to known: A grounded theory study among those who have learned about and from their depression*. ProQuest Information & Learning, US.


